Acura RL I (1996-2004): How to Remove the Bumpers

Production Years and Model Code:

The first-generation Acura RL (known as the Acura 3.5RL before the facelift) was produced from 1996 to 2004. The model's chassis code is KA9. It was the successor to the legendary Acura Legend and served as the brand's flagship sedan, designed to compete with luxury European and Japanese models.

Facelift:

A significant facelift occurred for the 2001 model year (fall 2000). Exterior changes included new headlights, a new grille, bumpers, and taillights. The interior received updated trim, a new multimedia system, and improved sound insulation. The most important technical update was the introduction of the SH-AWD (Super Handling All-Wheel Drive) system as an option in 2002 (for the US market), which was a revolutionary step for its time.

Technical Specifications:

- **Engine:** Gasoline V6 SOHC, 3.5L (C35A). Power: 217-225 hp (after facelift) at 5600 rpm. Torque: 294-347 Nm.
- **Transmission:** 4-speed automatic (pre-facelift) and 5-speed automatic (post-facelift).
- **Drivetrain:** Front-wheel drive (FWD) — standard. All-wheel drive (SH-AWD) — optional from 2002.
- **Suspension:** Independent, double-wishbone front and rear.
- **Dimensions:** Length ~495 cm, wheelbase ~291 cm.

Bumper Plastic Marking: >PP<

Depending on the year of manufacture, the mounting points may vary slightly.

Before removal, be sure to treat all screws with penetrating lubricant.

How to Remove the Front Bumper

1. Open and securely prop up the hood.
2. Between the headlights, remove the five clips securing the top part of the front bumper.
3. Move to the lower part. From under the car, unscrew eight screws.
4. In the wheel arches, free the fender liners from the bumper and unscrew the two screws securing the bumper corners to the fenders.
5. With an assistant, carefully pull the bumper forward and disconnect the wiring connectors from the running lights.

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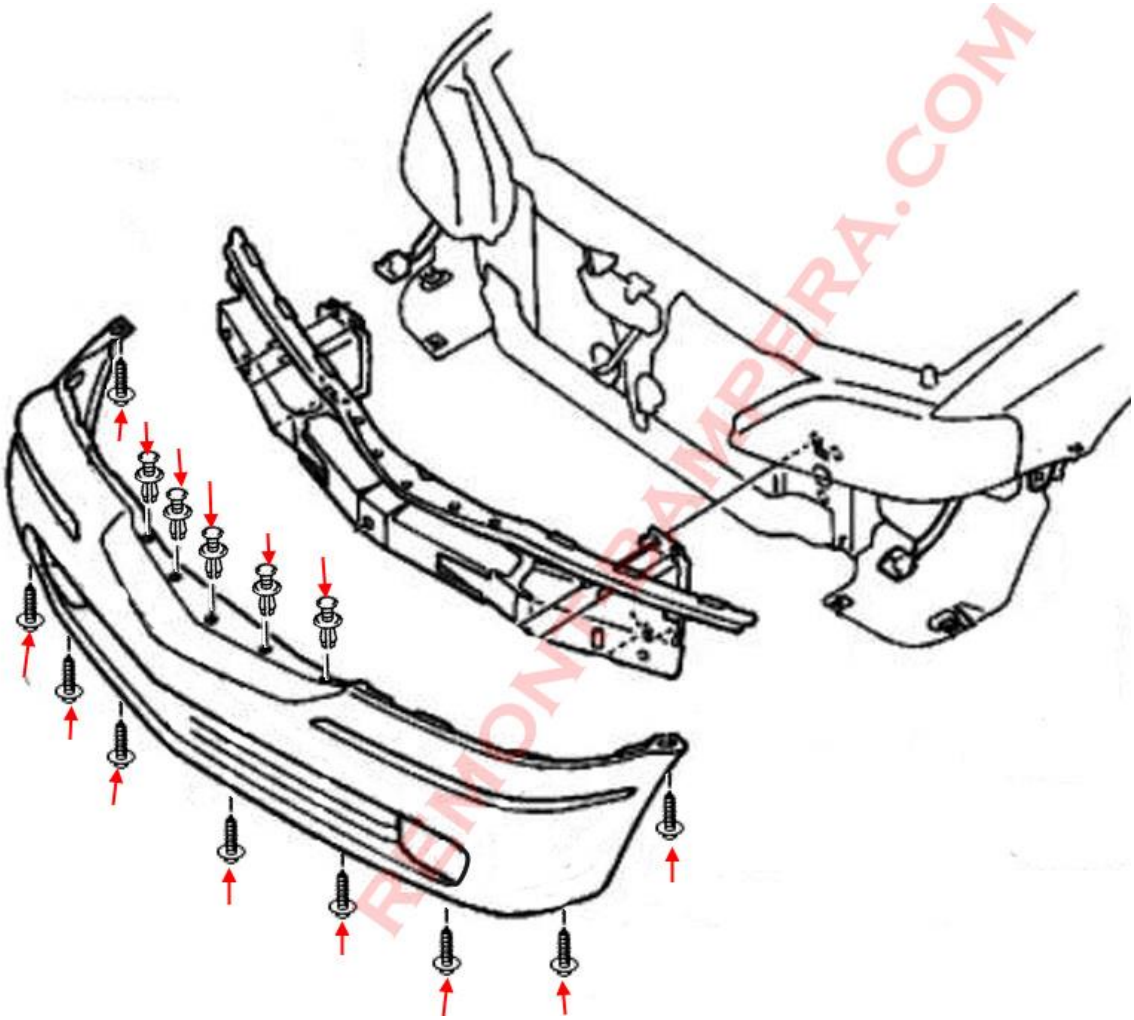
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How to Remove the Rear Bumper

1. Open the trunk lid.
2. Inside the trunk opening, unscrew five screws (or remove clips) securing the top part of the rear bumper.
3. Move underneath the car and remove four clips inserted from bottom to top.
4. In the wheel arches, unscrew the screws securing the fender liners and splash guards to the bumper.
5. Behind the liners, unscrew two screws (fastened from bottom to top) that secure the bumper corners to the quarter panels.
6. With an assistant, carefully pull the bumper backward. Installation is performed in reverse order.

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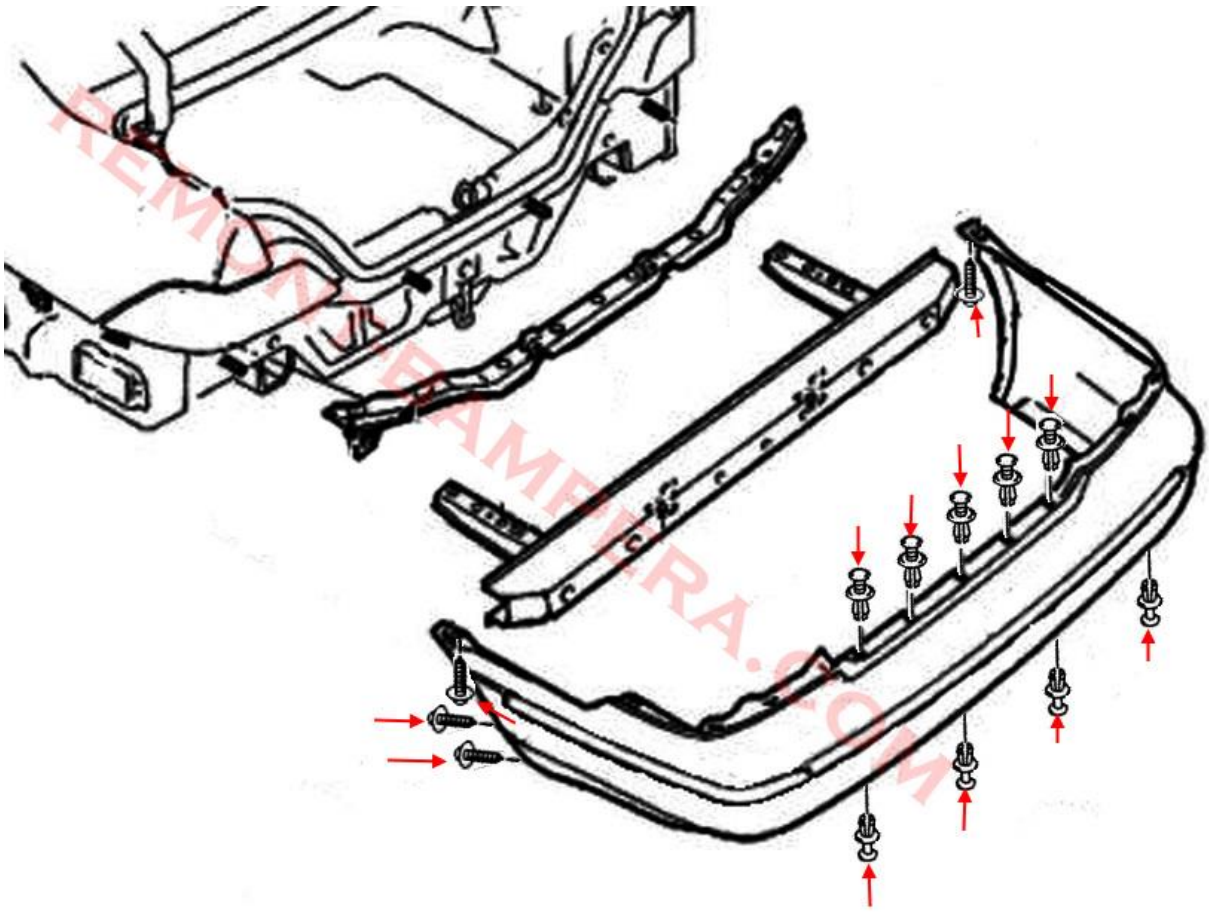

Interesting Facts About the Model:

- **Successor to a Legend:** The RL replaced the Acura Legend, but in some markets (e.g., Japan) it continued to be sold under that iconic name, Honda Legend.
- **Technological Breakthrough:** The SH-AWD system, first introduced on the RL, was unique. It not only distributed torque between the axles but, using an active rear differential, could send up to 100% of the rear torque to either rear wheel, actively aiding in cornering.
- **Aluminum Body:** The first-generation RL's body was 40% aluminum, reducing weight and improving corrosion resistance.
- **Hardly Changed:** Despite 8 years of production, the RL I underwent only one major facelift, which was atypical for the Japanese auto industry where models were usually updated more frequently.

Advantages:

- **Outstanding Reliability and Durability:** Thanks to the proven powertrain and high-quality assembly, many examples are still on the road today.
- **Comfortable and Quiet Cabin:** Spacious, with high-quality materials and excellent sound insulation.

- **Advanced Technology:** The availability of optional SH-AWD and a good (for its time) Bose audio system.
- **Smooth and Predictable Dynamics:** The engine provides confident thrust, and the suspension is tuned for comfort.
- **Passive Safety:** In 1999, the RL became one of the first cars to receive the highest 5-star rating in NHTSA crash tests.

Disadvantages:

- **Conservative Design:** Its appearance, even after the facelift, looked restrained compared to competitors.
- **High Weight and Modest Performance:** The powerful engine was often offset by the car's weight, especially in the AWD version. Acceleration from 0-100 km/h took about 8 seconds, which was modest for a flagship.
- **Expensive Maintenance and Repair:** The cost of original parts and servicing complex systems (like SH-AWD) remains high.
- **Fuel Consumption:** For its class, the car was quite thirsty, especially in the city.
- **Competition:** In the market, the RL often lost out in terms of image and prestige to German competitors (BMW 5-Series, Mercedes-Benz E-Class).

The catalog of bumper removal instructions.